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V CORPS' IRON SOLDIERS CASE THEIR COLORS, PREPARE TO RETURN HOME

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BAGHDAD, Iraq – In a brief, early-morning ceremony, V Corps' Task Force 1st Armored Division cased its banners and flags July 4, signifying its departure from the Operation Iraqi Freedom area of operations.

The division spent 15 months in the combat zone as the largest division-based task force in U.S. Army history. During that time 1st Armored Division's "Iron Soldiers" secured some of Baghdad's roughest neighborhoods and brought stability to the city's more than 5 million residents, as well as its surrounding countryside.



SGT M. TRENT LOWRY, USMC

Commanders and their command sergeants major from V Corps' 1st Armored Division case their units' colors, signifying the end of the division's 15-month deployment to Iraq, during a ceremony at Baghdad International Airport July 4.

After turning responsibility for operations in the city over to the 1st Cavalry Division April 15, the task force headed south to pacify the cities of Najaf, Diwaniyah, Al Kut and Karbala.

"Your performance in Baghdad showed a clear indication of the kind of professionalism that Iron Soldiers have always had," said Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, Multi-National Corps – Iraq commander.

"Iron Soldiers have great discipline, great precision," Metz continued. "I can assure you that the world watched as Iron Soldiers etched a place in history during your extension. Military history will note the tremendous tactical maneuvers of the Iron Soldiers. You can be very proud of that."

Statistics for Task Force 1st Armored Division's 15 months in Iraq

Number of battalion-level combat operations the task force conducted: 758
Number of enemy captured: 2,709

Weapons and ammunition captured:

- 432 Rockets
- 33,854 Artillery/ Mortar Rounds
- 229 Rocket / Mortar Tubes
- 68 Surface-to-air missiles
- 247 Rocket-propelled grenade launchers
- 1,916 Rocket propelled-grenade rounds
- 1,725 Rifles
- 19 Shotguns
- 18 Machineguns
- 260 Pistols
- 10,665 Grenades
- 31,860 Anti-aircraft artillery rounds
- 2,622 Tank Rounds
- 16,781 Small arms rounds
- Improvised Explosive Device materials
- Hundreds of pounds of explosives

During the early morning ceremony representatives from the division's units honored the accomplishments of their Soldiers, then rolled and sheathed the flags and guidons that represent each unit.

Afterwards, division Commander Maj. Gen. Martin Dempsey applauded his Soldiers and remarked on the significance of their accomplishments.

"Fifteen months ago," Dempsey said, "Iron

Soldiers of 1AD and Dragoons of 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment formed a Task Force and set out to make the world safer for their fellow Americans and provide an opportunity for the Iraqi people to be free. They did that."

"Three months ago," Dempsey continued, "the same group of Soldiers were asked to remain in Iraq to defeat a militia uprising and preserve the path to an Iraqi sovereignty. They did that, too. I hope you are as proud of what you have accomplished as I am of you."

After handing responsibility for operations in Baghdad over to the 1st Cavalry Division, Dempsey reminded the Soldiers that his words to the cavalry were brief and to the point: "Talking ain't fighting. Let's get about that business."

Among the task force's accomplishments during its 15 months of duty included planning and executing Operations Iron Hammer, Iron Justice, Iron Grip, Longstreet, Iron Bullet, Iron Promise and Iron Saber. During these task force operations, Soldiers captured more than 700 criminals, members of the former regime and insurgents. They also confiscated thousands of rockets, mortars, tank rounds, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms.

At the same time, Iron Soldiers supervised an estimated \$2 billion in community improvements to Baghdad and rebuilt the city's infrastructure, restoring public utilities, facilities and services, refurbishing war-damaged buildings and repairing roads.

Those missions and achievements will be symbolized by a battle streamer attached to the division's colors, Dempsey said.

"The colors we have just cased are part of what defines us," announced Dempsey.

"Sometime soon we will add a battle streamer to those colors. That simple strip of silk will represent many things.

"It will represent more than a year of your life. It will represent your 135 fellow Soldiers who gave their lives for this mission and who made the journey home ahead of us. It will represent your great courage in battle. It will represent your remarkable stamina over these past 15 months.

"It will represent your unshakable honor, tested in the most complex environment imaginable. It will represent your immeasurable sacrifice and that of your families.

"Forevermore, it will represent you," Dempsey said. "These are truly your colors now. You have earned the right to stand tall behind them."

